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Nation

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Democracy or hypocrisy?

by Will Nicholls

As I write, the Canadian Senate is in the middle of a debate over a motion to suspend three of its members without pay. They are Mike Duffy, Pamela Wallin and Patrick Brazeau, all Harper appointees who have since been forced out of the Conservative caucus after embarrassing revelations about questionable residency claims and improper expenses. For months now, the three Senators have been starring in scandal that refuses to die, one that is staining the Conservative brand.

Pamela Wallin, the former star television journalist, questioned the timing of the move to suspend her and the other embattled Senators. "It is also designed to appease the party faithful before the Conservative party at the end of the month," she said in reference to the Tory policy convention in Calgary October 31 to November 2. She argued that the motion disregards the rule of law and is an abuse of power. "When a government chooses to flaunt due process to go after a perceived enemy, it's very hard to fight it."

It's difficult to feel sorry for these three. The government may be throwing them under the bus, but they are far from innocent victims in this controversy. Duffy was double-billing as he campaigned and raised funds for a number of Conservative candidates during the last election. Duffy was reimbursed for travel expenses by the candidates but then billed the Senate for the same trips claiming he was on Senate business. He now says he was forced to accept a $90,000 gift from a Prime Minister staffer to repay his unjustified expense claims. It's a drop in the bucket for the Conservatives since it is likely a tiny fraction of the amount he helped raise for the party and individual candidates.

For her part, Wallin has paid back $150,000 to settle questionable claims, but this amount could grow when the final accounting is done. Many have said Wallin was living a jet-set lifestyle on the taxpayers' tab. Wallin denies this charge and said she welcomes an "open, fair, transparent process."

Finally, the human train wreck that is Patrick Brazeau denies any wrongdoing anywhere and anytime now or in the future. It may be redundant to observe his role as the ultimate Uncle Tom for his Conservative masters in his role to undermine Aboriginal issues and concerns. His Senate appointment was a reward and recognition of his worth as a useful Native figurehead after his shameful performance as National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Then problems surfaced, with assault charges, false housing claims and questionable tax returns.

The real question to be asked is whether or not these members of the Senate can be suspended without pay before the final word is in on the charges against them. The question of their guilt or lack of it does not enter the consideration of the motion. Nor does the question of whether or not the suspension without pay is being orchestrated for political purposes have any real validity.

In the end it is the Senate that must decide whether the three Senators should be suspended without pay until the courts decide their fate. This is not a "violation of their constitutional right to the presumption of innocence," as Wallin claims but an internal matter for the Senate. In any case, recourse to a court of law is not diminished or withheld for the Senators. By the time you read this a decision will have been rendered, but one thing is for sure: this story will be on the front pages for a long while to come.

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Ian Achneepineskum at the Solidarity for Elsipogtog march

photo by:
Akiva Levitas

The medium is the message

by Sonny Orr

Long ago, when books were rare or unheard of, storytelling was the way to pass on wisdom, humour, dirty jokes, tragedies and just plain old information. Then along came the Bible, which was translated into a new written language called syllabics, or "mi-me-mo-ma," as some liked to call it. In a way, the teaching style of the written Cree reminded me of the way French used to be taught, with its endless repetitions of passé composes and subjunctifs, both of which contrasted with the rhythmic style of the old storytelling ways we were used to learning.

In fact, the Bible was the only book written in Cree and Inuktitut for nearly a century. Today, because of the dedicated efforts and time the school board has put into making Cree a written language, it became a welcome sight for many Elders, who had only one book to read from. I think now, with everyone's heads bowed down to the mighty internet tablet or smartphone, that the ancient style for transferring knowledge may be again in danger. Unless… everything goes digital, Cree language, stories, the works.

In many ways, the digital world could be the answer to preserving and enhancing our families and culture. It may come to pass that it will replace good old Juumshum and Gogum (grandparents in general) for cultural retention. Just imagine: instead of Juumshum guiding you on how to set a beaver trap, you just carry his teachings, maybe even for that very spot and by the dam itself, on an iPod or tablet. In fact, he could even Facetime with you to see the trap being set live from his cozy, solar-powered cabin in his neck of the woods. And the girls, well, they could do the same for Gogum. Ahhh… tradition meets technology.

In some parts of the world, people have taken to simply putting an iPad in their seat at events like weddings to dance at the party, kiss the bride and even give toasts to the happy couple, all for pennies. I can see little remote-control robots with an iPad at live-yet-virtual parties. Care to tango anyone?

We could do the same, but I am afraid I may be muzzled by the transportation industry. The need to physically travel to another community for events could greatly curb business so much that the entire industry could collapse if this gets out. Wait a minute, someone's knocking at the door, who could it be? No one knocks around here… Whew, just some mixed-up kid in a Freddie Kruger costume who thinks Halloween got changed due to some hockey schedule. Where was I, oh, yes, getting muzzled.

Far from being muzzled, our own distinct society could forever be engraved in some cloud (sounds a bit oxymoronic doesn't it?) until something wipes out its energy supply, or simply, until the world ends. We could survive forever, practically, and yet still, remain the same. Now, if that only had something to spoil that scenario. Uh oh, battery low, anyone seen my charger? I need to recharge this laptop so my words can be preserved forev–

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Cutting the excess

One man's experience with weight-loss surgery

by Amy German

While it isn't the most common solution, weight-loss surgery can be a valid choice for people who are morbidly obese, particularly when the health dangers outweigh the surgical risks.
This was the case for Luke Macleod, who, up until just over a year ago, weighed almost 500 pounds.

"It was over the last 20 years that I really started putting on weight. Before that I was quite active," said MacLeod, who works at the James Bay Cree Communication Society.

But it was a major change in lifestyle, swapping out physical labour for office work, giving up his walks around the community for riding around in a new pick-up truck while continuing to eat large meals that led to a massive weight gain over a 20-year period.

"It was starting to get difficult to move around, especially with getting up the stairs. At one point the doctors became concerned about my heart and I was told that this was because of my weight," said MacLeod.

He was also diagnosed as diabetic and prescribed blood-sugar medication.

These factors led MacLeod's decision to pay out of pocket for a vertical sleeve gastrectomy. In this procedure, a surgeon removes a large portion of the stomach so that the amount of food a patient can ingest is limited and the patient also feels much fuller after eating a smaller meal portion.

The surgery cost $18,000 but MacLeod said it was a good investment. Waiting lists for this surgery in the public healthcare system can last two years or more.

To prepare for this surgery, MacLeod said he went on a medically supervised liquid diet, in which he drank a powdered shake preparation in lieu of regular meals for a few months to help the weight-loss process.

Luke MacLeod interviewing 1964 Olympic gold medal winner Billy Mills

MacLeod also said he opted for the private clinic route because he said that the surgery was easier to recover from.

"They didn't have to open up the entire stomach, it was laparoscopic and so they did four or five small incisions and I was up and walking around just a few hours after having this kind of surgery."

He was released from the clinic only two days later to finish his recovery at home.

MacLeod said the surgery and the price tag was worth it as he would have eventually faced greater loss of mobility that may have led to a bedridden existence.

Another motivation to renew activities like fishing and hunting, and to pass on that traditional knowledge to his grandchildren.

MacLeod said that he now has to watch his portions diligently. Overeating could burst his sleeve and land him back in the hospital. He also has to watch the type of food he eats as fatty meats like goose or bear no longer agree with him.

Just over a year later, MacLeod said that he is now down over 80 pounds and no longer has to take medication, including his diabetes medication.

At the same time, he said that weight loss is a very slow process and he has a long way to go toward his weight-loss goals. Once he is further along in this journey, MacLeod will return to the private clinic for another surgery to remove loose skin.

MacLeod is very grateful for the support he received from loved ones and the local clinic staff in Mistissini.

For more information on private weight-loss surgery: www.weightlosssurgery.ca

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For the launch of their campaign to educate the Cree Nation about safe firearm storage, the Eeyou Eenou Police Force and the Cree Trappers Association are having a contest to win the beautiful Stack-On Firearm Safe Model GCB 908 for eight firearms.
One safe will be given to each of the nine Cree community winners.

Deadline to submit your story is Friday, November 22, 2013.
The draw will be early December. The nine winners will be announced in the Nation on December 27, 2013.

Send your story with the mention "Gun Safety Contest", by email to: gunsafety@eepf.ca or by fax: (819) 855-2832.

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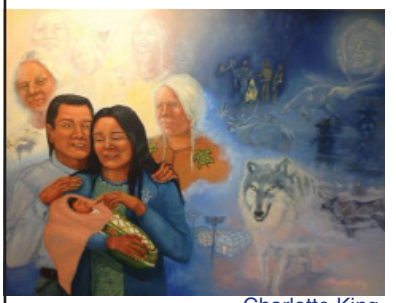

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Screening injustice

Two Alanis Obomsawin documentaries bring Attawapiskat into focus

by Amy German

Alanis Obomsawin, one of Canada's most prolific documentary filmmakers, was the talk of the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) with her documentary on Attawapiskat, *Hi-Ho Mistahey!*

Chronicling how the Ontario James Bay community's fight for a new elementary school evolved into a national movement of First Nations children for the betterment of on-reserve education, *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* took Toronto audiences by storm.

"The audiences were just extraordinary. It was overwhelming. The film was shown three times and the first time there wasn't enough room in the cinema," said Obomsawin, who has produced over 40 films on Aboriginal issues over a four-decade career.

The film tells the story of Attawapiskat youth activist Shannen Koostachin's life, struggle and untimely death. It goes on to chronicle the birth of a foundation inspired by her dream of "safe and comfy" schools for all First Nations children, while detailing the injustice and the inequality at the heart of this real-life drama.

Obomsawin breathes new life into this story by letting it be told by those most affected: Koostachin's family, the children of Attawapiskat, the children who they inspired across Canada and Charlie Angus, the MP who led them on the crusade to end educational apartheid in this country. The result is a breathtaking two-hour film that is as heartbreaking as it is uplifting.

"There are many issues to resolve but you have to start somewhere. There are many communities that need the same things, like schools and better services, be it in health or education. That's really the main thing. You can't resolve everything overnight but if you document it, a documentary is the best gun you can have," said Obomsawin.

While shooting her film, Obomsawin was forced to put it aside as Attawapiskat's 2011 housing crisis unfolded and helped spark a national movement now famous as Idle No More. The result of this detour was *The People of the Kattawapiskak River*, a 50-minute documentary released last year.

Obomsawin said it was Attawapiskat's children who inspired the two films, since both chronicle the brutal impact on kids growing up in such dire conditions. They are the magnetic stars of both documentaries.

"It was total magic to just watch them and all of the other children from across Canada who supported them. They were very concerned about what was happening in Attawapiskat," said Obomsawin.

The People of the Kattawapiskak River offers insight into a community that the mainstream media rarely covered in any detail, and reveals the reality behind some of the more sensational headlines that subsequently dominated coverage during the height of the Idle No More movement and Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike.

An outrageous example of media excess was provided by Ezra Levant's angry Sun News tirades. One of his rants denounced Attawapiskat for acquiring a Zamboni for its skating rink during the housing crisis, while never mentioning that the purchase was made through fundraising or that the arena is the community's only source of recreation. Fortunately, Charlie Angus provides balance by pointing out that the arena is actually the difference between life and death for some youth.

While *The People of the Kattawapiskak River* was sold to television shortly after it was made, Obomsawin said there was so much interest in the community's side of the story that after airing three times, the NFB made it freely available online for a week, when it was viewed to completion over 50,000 times.

Despite being thrilled with the reception of *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* at TIFF, Obomsawin said the most important viewers were Koostachin's parents, who were the first people to screen the film.

"They felt very honoured that this film was made for their daughter and the community," said Obomsawin. "It was very touching."

> You can't resolve everything overnight but if you document it, a documentary is the best gun you can have.
>
> Alanis Obomsawin

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Diamond doc shines at film fest

Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond's latest project, *Inuit Cree Reconciliation*, was a hit at its October 17 debut at Toronto's ImagineNATIVE film and arts festival, later winning the festival's Best Short Documentary Award.

Co-directed by Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, the 44-minute film details conflict between Inuit and Cree in 18th century Northern Quebec and examines how that history colours the contemporary relationship between the two Aboriginal communities.

The film highlights the 2011 Peace Celebration Event on the Napstakopa River, at which Cree and Inuit representatives commemorated 200 years of peace at a site where their ancestors once confronted each other as enemies. The film also features interviews with Elders from Whapmagoostui and Kuujjuaraapik who delve into the intricacies of two distinct peoples living side by side in the modern world.

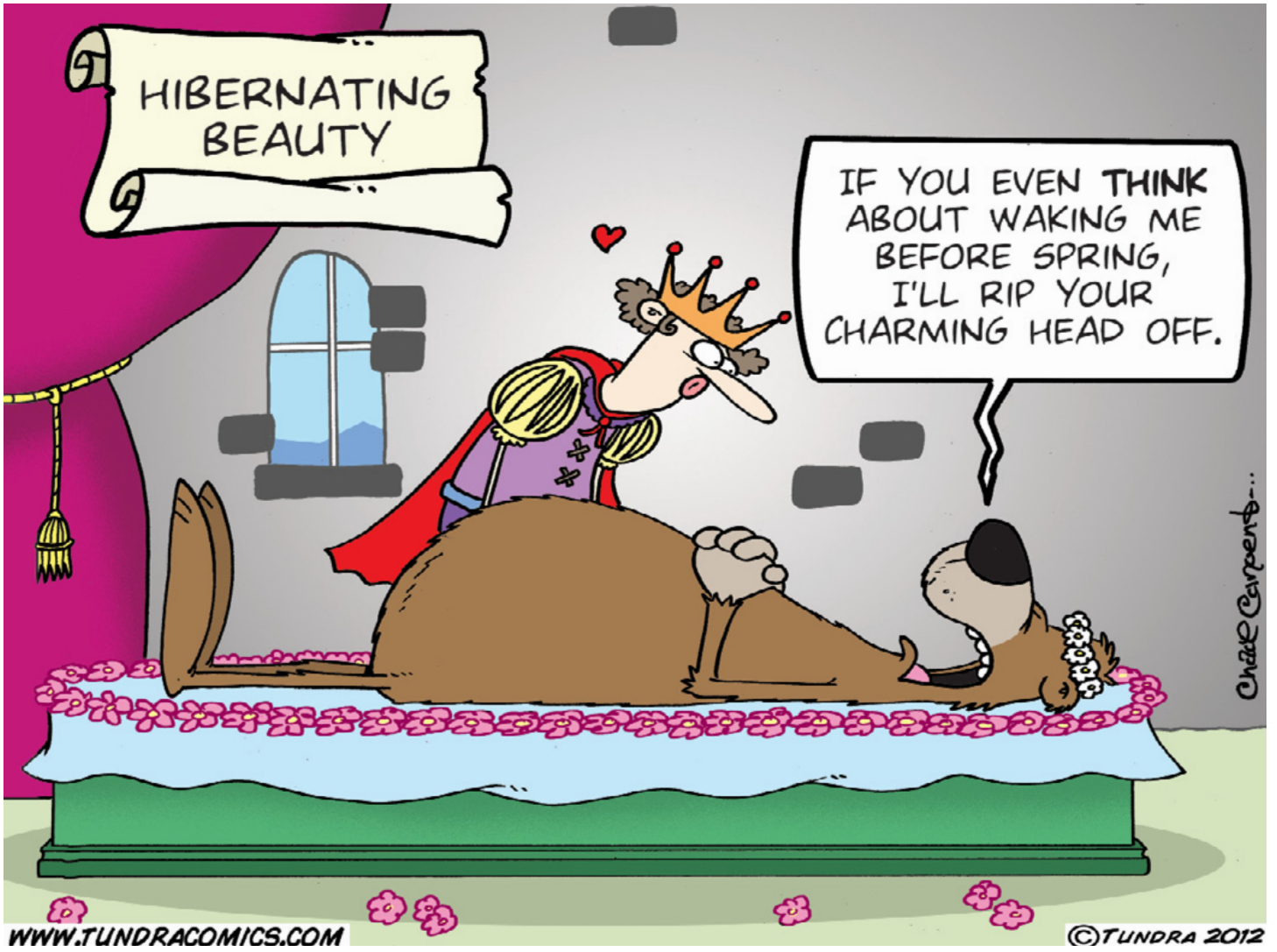
photo courtesy of imagiNATIVE

Scene from *Inuit Cree Reconciliation*

The documentary was presented in both Cree and Inuktitut with English subtitles.

Correction

The Nation would like make note of a correction to the article "Ending Agression: Cree women invite men to help end violence against women" on page 20 of Volume 20-24. Wayne Rabbitskin, who was recognized for leading a group of male Nishiiyuu walkers from Chisasibi to Mistissini with the goal of raising awareness to end violence against women, was incorrectly referred to as Wally Rabbitskin in the article. We regret the error and extend our apologies to Mr. Rabbitskin.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Deconstructing the road ahead

MP Romeo Saganash digs for meaning buried in the Conservative Throne Speech

by Amy German

Governor General David Johnston delivered the Speech from the Throne October 16 to plot the political road that Canada's Conservative government intends to pave over the last two years of its mandate.

The speech featured numerous references to the history and challenges of Canada's First Nations. The Nation asked Romeo Saganash, the NDP MP for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou, for his thoughts on the speech and what it might mean for his constituents.

The Nation: What is your reaction to the comment about how Canada's European settlers "were undaunted. They dared to seize the moment that history offered. Pioneers, then few in number, reached across a vast continent. They forged an independent country where none would have otherwise existed?"

Romeo Saganash: I am disappointed that this important speech ignored basic historical facts about the founding nations of this country. But I am also reminded that it was only four years ago at the G20 meetings that Prime Minister Harper said that Canada has no history of colonialism, which we know is historically inaccurate. I hope that the Prime Minister would apologize for ignoring the history of the First Peoples of this land. You can't build a relationship with any group of people while denying their basic history and statements like those only add to the mistrust that many Indigenous peoples have of this government.

TN: They also made reference to the anniversary of the Royal Proclamation (1763) and its promise to respect the rights of Indigenous people and their relationship with the Crown. Do you believe that the federal government is keeping the promises made at that time, in the spirit that it was written? What should they be doing? What would the NDP like to see the Conservatives do for Canada's Aboriginal people?

RS: This government is not keeping those promises and in some cases, they seem to be going out of their way to avoid keeping those promises. It is not just me saying this; UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya raised many concerns regarding the government's conduct towards and funding of Aboriginal groups in Canada. He encouraged Canada to take a "less adversarial, position-based approach" in regards to Aboriginal and treaty rights. We in the NDP agree, which is why we have been calling on the government to take a true nation-to-nation approach for years now.

TN: How is this failing the large number of Indigenous peoples in your riding?

RS: The Harper Conservatives are failing all people in my riding by not learning from our experiences in Eeyou Istchee and all of northern Quebec. We have achieved great things for all people in our region through the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the Paix des Braves. While other parts of Canada seek to learn from what we have done here, the Conservatives seem determined to continue to ignore our good work. In doing so, they seem determined to repeat mistakes made by past governments, and that promises to do harm to all people in our region.

TN: In terms of Native people in your riding, was there anything in particular in the speech that you see being rolled out to change the lives of those individuals or to impact them in a positive way? In terms of the environment? Development?

RS: Unfortunately I did not see anything like that. There was nothing to address the housing shortages in the region. There was nothing to help lower the cost of groceries in the region. There was nothing to help improve peoples' day-to-day lives. The only thing that the Conservatives promised our region was to make it a bit cheaper to watch "Here Comes Honey Boo-Boo," but that is cold comfort when all these issues of greater importance are ignored.

TN: While the Cree have their own systems for how education is delivered to youth, the rest of the Indigenous people within your riding do not. The Conservatives said that they "will continue working with First Nations to develop stronger, more effective and more accountable on-reserve education systems." What does this mean to you?

RS: Sadly, the Conservatives will continue with their same approach to education, which has been firmly rejected by both the Assembly of First Nations and the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. Special Rapporteur Anaya raised his concerns about the Conservatives' approach on their proposed First Nations Education Act and the lack of consultation used to create it. The Conservatives need to address the chronic underfunding of First Nations students across Canada, yet Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt has been clear that no new money will come with this bill. You cannot make a better education system for anyone if you ignore the needs of those it is supposed to serve and deny the resources needed to make it work.

TN: In terms of the treatment of Aboriginal women in this country, they said that "Aboriginal women are disproportionately the victims of violent crime and that our government will renew its efforts to address the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women." How do you interpret this?

RS: I welcome the words from the Conservatives, but I am waiting to see if they will be followed by actions. If those actions are the same than they have been taken so far, then I have to doubt how serious they are. If they decide to change course and act on the NDP's long-standing call for a national inquiry for missing and murdered Aboriginal women, I will welcome it with open arms. Native Women's Association of Canada, the AFN, Anaya and the premiers of Canada have all called for a national inquiry and it is about time that the Conservatives make it happen.

TN: Will the people of your region actually benefit from the job-creation plans that are mentioned in the speech?

RS: There is no job-creation plan on offer, despite the fact that unemployment has increased by more than 270,000 and more than 1.3 million Canadians are unemployed under Harper's watch. The government previously announced it would go ahead with the Canada Job Grant and even paid millions of dollars in ads to publicize it, despite opposition from the provinces, including Quebec. In order for that program to work, the government will need partners in the provinces. Without that, there is no program to speak of. Also, there were no measures to tackle rising youth unemployment.

TN: What else was there in the speech that you took particular note of when it came to the people that you represent?

RS: I had hoped to hear that the Conservatives were going to tackle the ongoing corruption scandal in the Senate, yet they said next to nothing on the matter. Throughout the summer, my constituents have been expressing their concern and disgust about this scandal and they were expecting to see action. The government's silence speaks volumes about its view of the Senate and just gives more reason for why we should abolish this institution.

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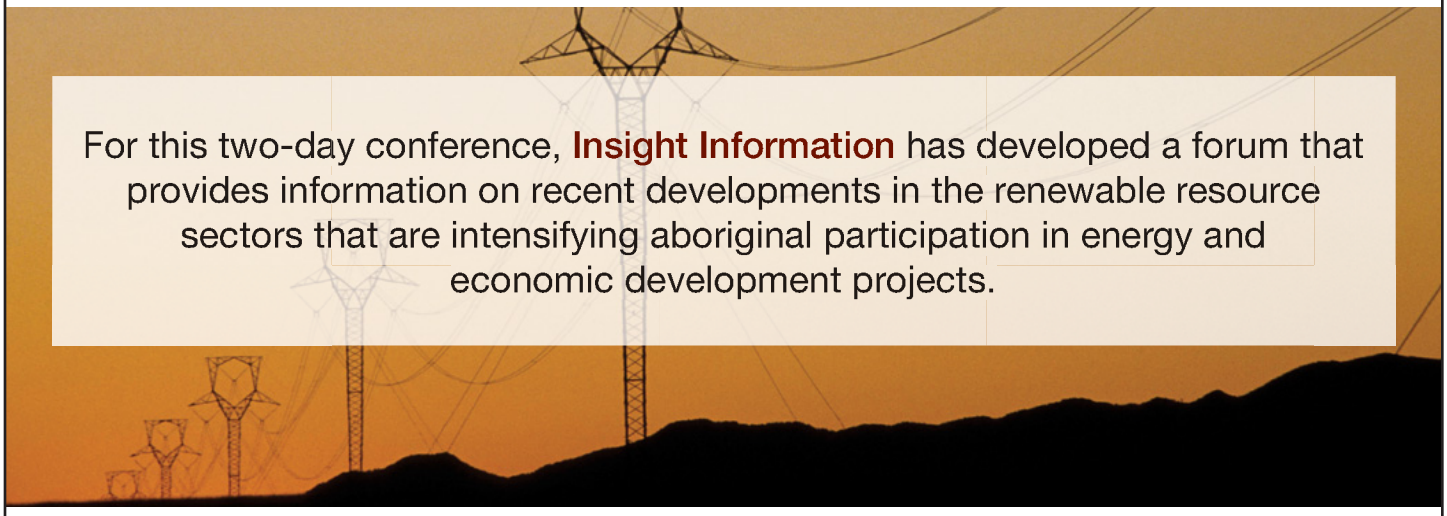

For this two-day conference, **Insight Information** has developed a forum that provides information on recent developments in the renewable resource sectors that are intensifying aboriginal participation in energy and economic development projects.

Conference highlights:

- Environmental and social acceptability of energy projects on Aboriginal land
- The East West Tie Line: innovative transmission development
- Enabling First Nation and Métis participation in the development of energy projects
- Financing Aboriginal energy projects
- Engaging Aboriginal Peoples in energy projects: Ring of Fire and beyond
- Remote communities connection challenges
- From consultation to partnerships

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We can treat it before there are any real symptoms, completely preventing blindness.

Virtual sight

New technology could prevent diabetes-related blindness

by Amy German

A technology that has just been made available to the diabetics of Eeyou Istchee could help prevent the onset of diabetic-related blindness. The tele-retinopathy process will transmit retina images taken in the north to specialists so that the patient can access top-notch medical care without leaving their home community.

Patients in remote areas like the James Bay region will now access ophthalmologists who specialize in retina diseases and who are able to provide early diagnoses of any eye-related anomaly.

"The first thing to remember about tele-retinopathy is that it is important to look for changes in the retina because of how diabetes can affect the eye," said Dr. David Dannenbaum, who works for the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. "We can treat it before there are any real symptoms, completely preventing blindness. However, if you wait until you have symptoms, it's too late."

According to Johanne Desrochers, Associate Director for Telehealth Services at the McGill University Health Centre in Montreal, the new program was set up after the CBHSSJB expressed a need for better medical services. New technology makes the information exchange an easy procedure. Given the diabetes epidemic in the north, this service was a priority.

In the past, patients either saw an ophthalmologist who would travel from community to community or were flown to a community that offered the services. Not only was this a costly process, it often wasn't practical.

"We built a program with a technological platform that is now being rolled out in each of the communities in the Cree territory. So far we have two communities where this is already started – Waskaganish and Waswanipi," said Desrochers.

The CBHSSJB set up a program to train community health representatives (CHRs) how to take photos of the retinas and then transfer the image into a software application. The image is then sent to the specialist who either recommends treatment or monitoring. Someone will now be on hand in each community to make this simple test available when it is needed.

"This exam requires two people – a CHR to take the picture, and a nurse who is on hand to dilate the pupil so that the picture is of better quality," explained Desrochers.

According to Desrochers, once the image is sent to the specialist, it will be evaluated for an anomaly or changes in the retina that would require further follow-up. Sometimes this could mean urgent follow-up with an ophthalmologist or more monitoring over the coming years.

The service does not mean a reduction in face-to-face examinations. Ophthalmologists will still travel to the communities when they are needed.

This program is only available in only two regions so far, James Bay and Témiscamingue. In areas like Montreal there is still a lengthy wait to see an ophthalmologist so patients in the north are actually getting more timely service than those in the south.

At the same time, Dannenbaum stressed that patients need to know that there is a big difference between eye specialists. He often has diabetic patients who think that they have seen an ophthalmologist when in fact they were examined by an optometrist.

Dannenbaum said screening is different from seeing the doctor who comes to measure a patient's eyes for glasses.

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"Cree patients are young with their diabetes and it is a new disease in the sense that we have seen an increase of about 60% of Eeyouch diagnosed with diabetes in the last 10 years."

The heart of the diabetes epidemic

by Amy German

While blindness and kidney failure are two of the better-known consequences of diabetes, heart disease and stroke in fact account for about 65% of deaths among those who suffer from the disease. This fact stood out in new research highlighted by Dr. David Dannenbaum of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.

Dannenbaum and a CBHSSJB colleague presented recent data on Cree diabetics at the Vascular 2013 Conference in Montreal this past October. According to Dannenbaum, three main findings among Cree diabetics point to a looming heart health crisis: the numbers are skyrocketing, those being diagnosed are getting younger than ever and, finally, these patients are likewise facing complications at a much earlier age.

Now, Cree diabetics are on average diagnosed at about age 40, fully 20 years earlier than the Canadian average of age 60. Meanwhile, at 99.7%, almost all new Cree cases consist of type 2 diabetes, also significantly higher than in the non-Native population.

"Cree patients are young with their diabetes and it is a new disease in the sense that we have seen an increase of about 60% of Eeyouch diagnosed with diabetes in the last 10 years," said Dannenbaum.

These statistics get more troubling when combined with other common problems recorded nationally by the National Diabetes Fact Sheet. Adult diabetics experience heart-disease death rates about two to four times higher than adults without diabetes. This national database also reported that among diabetes-related death certificates in people under 65 in 2004, almost 80% died of cardiovascular disease.

It's a scenario for a health catastrophe. The potential for heart disease increases the longer one has diabetes. And the younger a person develops diabetes, particularly if it and other health problems go untreated, the greater is the risk for heart disease.

"At the moment, 12% of the Crees we have diagnosed with diabetes also have heart disease, but this is just the beginning of another health problem," said Dannenbaum.

Dannenbaum stressed that heart disease happens much later than kidney problems, usually 10 to 15 years after a patient becomes diabetic.

Some of the more common heart problems in diabetics include angina or heart attacks caused by arteries that are more easily clogged as a result of diabetes. Combined with secondary factors such as smoking, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, the likelihood of a heart attack increases exponentially.

Still, Dannenbaum stressed that the threat of diabetic heart disease is easily avoidable.

"If you take care of your health, meaning your blood pressure, your cholesterol, your smoking and your diabetes, you can change this," said Dannenbaum.

Neither do any of these factors necessarily require significant medication, Dannenbaum said. For example, not everybody with high blood pressure needs to be on medication.

"What is important is that the blood pressure is at a healthy level. You need to keep your blood pressure under control," he said. "Some patients don't even need to be on medication for their sugar either. Patients need to pay attention to more than just their blood sugar. Diabetes is about blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking and sugar."

While Dannenbaum said that young diabetics typically do not suffer heart problems, but it's more important than ever that they make healthy choices now to avoid the disease in the future.

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Caroline Stockli

Age 44, St-Bruno-de-Guigues, Nurse Team Leader

"I was promoted to the position of Nurse Team Leader in April, 2012. Currently, my biggest challenges consist of keeping up the pace, monitoring the evolution of the project and mobilizing my team. Every day, I have the opportunity to learn, contribute ideas and hone my skills in occupational health and safety."

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Brandon Jolly, Savannah Jolly, Lexis Beattie and Brittany Moar

Lessons in democracy

Nemaska students question lithium mining in their traditional territory

by Jesse Staniforth

It isn't often that youth from Nemaska's Luke Mettaweskum High School participate in a community meeting about local mining projects, and it's even more rare that they receive a standing ovation for the effort. But that's what happened October 9 at the Nemaska band office.

That afternoon, the students were supposed to attend a dance class. But Youth Fusion program coordinator Lexis Beattie, who arrived in Nemaska in September in an effort to reduce dropout rates, had a different idea. He knew that Nemaska Lithium Inc. was holding a meeting to discuss its mine proposal 20 kilometres outside of the community.

"I was like, 'Hey, what do you think of going to the lithium mine meeting?'" said Beattie. "I figured three or four people would come, but 15 showed up. When we got there, we made up the vast majority of people present."

Students came for different reasons. Some knew nothing about the mine and wanted basic information, others had some information and wanted more, while still others were angry about the project. On the other hand, some went to support the development. Many had opinions and questions, but once they arrived and discovered it was an open forum, were shy to step up to the microphone. However, encouragement from their peers helped them overcome their reticence.

The youth involvement may have been in part due to a significant step in the students' political development at Luke Mettaweskum High School. With Beattie's encouragement, the school recently established its first student council, called the Core after a suggestion by 15-year-old student Brittany Moar.

"I ASKED THEM
'HOW WILL THE MINE AFFECT THE YOUTH?'
THEY WOULDN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION."

"That's because Nemaska is the heart of the Cree Nation," Moar explained. "The heart sounded kind of cheesy to me, so we named it the Core, because it sounded more suitable. And students are the core of the school. The student council gives us the power to organize events and have more fun."

Moar's family has a camp in the area of the proposed mine and is concerned about what will happen to it. "I go there every summer," she said. "I was pissed off, in all honesty. I'm worried about [tailings] getting into the water. I asked what would be good and bad about the mine, but I didn't get an answer. They were only talking about what would be good, about how it would make money."

Savannah Jolly's family also has nearby hunting camps. She asked the mining company to explain what the pros and cons of the project would be, but said she was unhappy with their response.

"They only really explained [what would be] good about the mine," she said. "The bad part was very generic. I wanted details, and they were just, like 'Um, maybe the blasting.' They only gave small details about each thing. Dust, and stuff like that. It didn't clear up much for me."

Jolly left the meeting feeling that the mining company was hiding something. "I don't feel too good about the mine," she said.

Meanwhile, 12-year-old Brandon Jolly said he knows that lithium is used in batteries and in cellular phones, but he is still concerned that the material will be mined on traditional Cree lands.

"I asked them 'How will [the mine] affect the youth?' They wouldn't answer my question," said Jolly. "It sounded like they were doing it for the money. So then I asked, 'Is this just all about money?'"

Despite his frustration with what he felt were evasive answers by the company, Jolly was proud that he had participated in the meeting.

"I'm probably the first 12-year-old to speak up in a meeting," said Jolly, who added that he might one day consider going into Cree politics.

Despite the students' tough questions, all of those gathered gave the students a standing ovation at the end of the meeting.

"The deputy chief said it was the first time in Nemaska history that youth were involved in this way," Beattie said.

Deputy Chief Thomas Jolly points out that a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the mine was signed between Nemaska Lithium Inc. and the Grand Council of the Crees in 2010, and that later that year the Cree Nation of Nemaska – through the Nemaska Development Corporation – invested $600,000 in shares of Nemaska Lithium Inc.

"We're not quite certain how it'll turn out," said Jolly, "but we're very pressed for time – we're only a matter of weeks away for the community or council to make a decision. Anything can happen between now and the council meeting to allow us to know where we're going with this. Beyond meetings, some people have suggested a referendum. That direction hasn't been taken, but we're certainly pressed for time, due to the Cree Naskapi Act. You have to conform to those rules if you wish to act in that manner."

Nonetheless, Deputy Chief Jolly says he's very impressed with the young people from the Core student council who spoke their minds about the mine proposal.

"They were very straightforward," he said. "It even stunned some of the people, the kind of questions these kids were asking. But everybody must be heard. If the mine does take place in a couple of years, they're going to be of legal age to participate. And right now, they have a better foresight than some adults."

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Volume 16, No. 01

2006 - 2008

The Nation Timeline

Jan. 20, 2006: New government, old prejudice – Editorial expresses fears over impending victory of Stephen Harper's Conservative party in federal election

Feb. 3, 2006: Jonathan Cheechoo talks to the Nation about the new NHL, Sweden and moose – Cree hockey player an

Sam Blacksmith

"exciting young winger" with the San Jose Sharks

Feb. 17, 2006: La Tuque residential school razed – Demolition is closure for hundreds of Cree who were abducted and subjected to abuses as children

March 3, 2006: In memory of Matthew Coon Come Sr. – Elder and grandfather of former Cree Grand Chief/AFN leader dies at age 114

March 31, 2006: Chishienuu Chiskutamaachwin; Elders wisdom – Mistissini program passes on traditional knowledge and skills

April 14, 2006: Grand Chief meets with Premier Charest – Mukash confirms that Great Whale is off the table, EM-1A project depends on environmental impact assessment

April 28, 2006: Pulling strings with Grand Chief Matthew Mukash – Mukash's priorities are establishing confidence and trust within government, firm but friendly relations with province and feds

June 9, 2006: The Nation takes Quebec by storm! – Magazine wins seven Quebec Community Newspaper Association awards

July 7, 2006: Air Creebec wins medi-vac contract – Airline to transport sick to Montreal hospitals, hopes to attract more Cree pilots, serve more communities with medical needs

Aug. 4, 2006: Former Native Alliance leader founds new off-reserve group – Guillaume Carle will lead umbrella group The Confederation of Aboriginal Peoples

Sept. 15, 2006: A Cree Pathway to southern schools – Montreal CEGEP introduces integration program specifically for Crees

Sept. 29, 2006: Cree trappers look to a diminished future – Resignation is the tone of conference with Hydro: "Nobody will survive trapping anymore. It's finished," says one tallyman.

Oct. 13, 2006: The classroom in crisis – Mistissini's school system deals with racism, high drop-out rates and cultural survival

Oct. 27, 2006: Just us – Incarceration rate for Native people 10 times higher than that of Canada's general population; Public Safety Minister denies discrimination

Nov. 10, 2006: Diabetes special – "Our bodies were built for sur-

vival and refined sugars were never part of that plan," says Chisasibi physician Darlene Kitty

Jan. 19, 2007: Rupert River goes to gallows – Sierra Club and Chisasibi chief fear for community's safety during construction and warn of high mercury levels on land to be flooded

March 2, 2007: Beleaguered Kashechewan weighs future – Report recommends moving community in wake of evacuations, E.coli, mould and subsequent spike in suicides

March 16, 2007: First Cree Idol crowned – Attawapiskat's Karen Sutherland wins second shot at Canadian Idol

May 11, 2007: Wemindji taking practical approach to wind farms – Grand Council supports Chief Rodney Mark's plan; "Not a mega-project," he says

July 20, 2007: MBJ project would dam Waswanipi River – Grand Council wasn't consulted by James Bay Municipality on $50-million project

Aug. 3, 2007: Unanimous consent – History made in $1.4-billion Cree-Canada agreement to establish self-government

Sept. 14, 2007: Mistissini radio voice is silenced – Police weigh whether or not to charge hit-and-run driver suspected in death of Willie Trapper

Oct. 26, 2007: Ouje-Bougoumou elects female chief – Louise Wapachee gets job back six years after one-month stint as chief came to an end with questionable revote

Nov. 9, 2007: "Where are all the bodies?" – Reverend Keith Annett searches for the kids who never came home from residential school

Dec. 7, 2007: Rez school survival payments – "For a crime of the century like that, I think it's the cheapest deal on the planet," says Waswanipi's Paul Dixon

Jan. 18, 2008: Mistissini faces wake-up call – Community shaken after student confesses to planning school shooting; Voyageur Memorial School closed for five days

Feb. 1, 2008: Cree School board launches campaign to confront problem of school violence – Vandalism and bullying contribute to academic failure, solutions sought

Feb. 15, 2008: MBJ mayors fight Cree police – James Bay Municipality mayors ask province to defeat bill that would have Cree officers policing Cree lands

March 14, 2008: $1.4-billion deal signed; Cree Nation celebrates the final implementation of the JBNQA; Quebec, Canada and Crees thought to finally be on the same page

March 28, 2008: Chantiers Chibougamau erects Route 167 blockade – Paix des Braves cited as major reason for logging restrictions

Wedding of Bella House and Tommy Washapabano, c. 1930s

April 25, 2008: UN Declaration adopted – House of Commons approves and must implement the Rights of Indigenous People declaration

June 6, 2008: A Crime Victims Assistance Centre is coming to Eeyou Istchee – Physical and psychological aid, advocacy for justice promised

June 20, 2008: "We want our school!" – On the National Day of Action, Attawapiskat students question "evasive" Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl about broken promise

July 4, 2008: Regional police force will change law enforcement in the North – Eeyou-Eenou merges community police forces, Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff first commish

July 18, 2008: The meaning of bullsh*t – Editorial reminds readers of definition in light of failed dyke at old Opimiska mine, lack of movement on Paix des Braves revenue-sharing

Aug. 1, 2008: Talk is cheap – AFN Chief Ghislain Picard likens amendment to Youth Protection Act (to relocate children whose safety is deemed compromised) to residential-school system

Aug. 15, 2008: The times are a-changin' – Darkness has lifted due to "a change in the cultures of both the Cree and Hydro-Québec," says editorial

Aug. 29, 2008: Cree brings home gold – Mistissini swimmer Gabriel Rabbitskin wins five medals in Indigenous Games

Sept. 12, 2008: Old man river – "Soon the powerful Rupert River will be silent with only stories of its glorious past to give it a voice"

Sept. 28, 2008: The worth of a modern treaty – Study on the JBNQA suggests that the Cree and Inuit are no better off than Natives of the Yukon or Nunavut

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ABORIGINALITY

Native traditions hook up with hip-hop culture at Montreal exhibit

Story and photos by Akiva Levitas

When it comes to hip-hop, promiscuity is the key to creativity. Mashing different styles to give birth to original sounds is central to the urban-music scene. That's why the *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture* exhibition, launched October 17 at Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain, concentrated on the beautiful bastards spawned by unexpected musical hook-ups.

The creative urges of Kathleen Ritter (from the Vancouver Art Gallery), Tania Willard (a Secwepemc artist and designer) and MAC curator Mark Lanctôt brought this novel presentation to life. Through the work of 24 artists, *Beat Nation* breaks down what it means to be an Aboriginal hip-hop artist in the context of contemporary urban life.

Many of the pieces use sounds and spoken word in the way other artists might use a brush stroke to paint a picture and tell a story. Although hip-hop is prominently displayed, it is the starting point for many of the artists who cross-breed contemporary life with their Aboriginal artwork.

"Using language as a tool to raise your voice is important to cultural identity," Lanctôt stated. "We know that very well here in Quebec that language and identity are strongly linked."

Identity is another theme that flows throughout the artists' pieces. For some works, it is subtle, but for others the identities that they create are quite prominent and visual, like the Feminine Warrior outfit created by Skeena Reece or Kent Monkman's transformation into his alter ego Miss Chief Eagle Testickle.

"We were really interested in how the artists created these different selves and what they express," said Willard during a press tour. "What we see throughout is how traditional pieces, like the button blanket, include introduced materials. So again we see what became a traditional aesthetic with cultural value is also this form of adaptation and innovation."

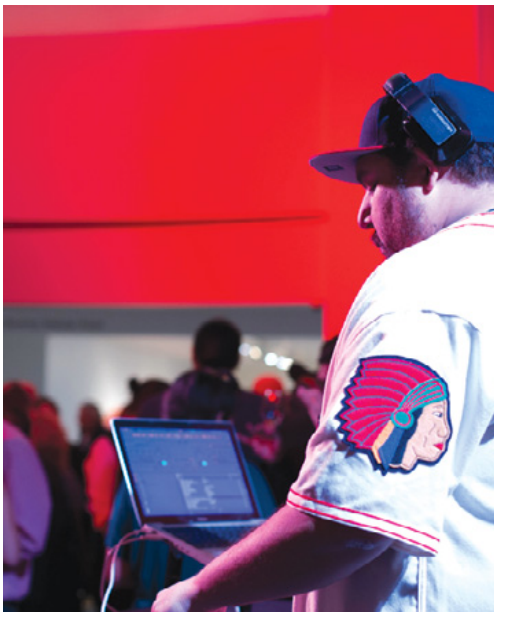
As Aboriginal culture navigates its way through the contemporary world, the contrast between young and old is reflected in how the youth merge outside influences into the dialogue of cultural tradition.

"One of the things we're trying to do in this exhibition is to address a continuum of innovation that happens in Aboriginal cultures," Ritter said. "Even though we think of glass beading as a traditional Aboriginal practice, glass beads were introduced after contact with the European. So it raises the question of what is traditional and what is contemporary."

A prime example of this melding is the *Native Kids Ride Bikes* project by Dylan Miner. A different Aboriginal artist designed each bike in Miner's installation in a way that showcases their personal style and yet, as part of a whole, creates something distinctly First Nations.

"It's a socially engaged project that I've been working on for three years," explained Miner. "In collaborating with urban Native youth to put together low-riders based on the teachings of the Elders we get conversations going between the generations. The bike becomes a way to think about migrations, sustainable forms of transportation, traditional stories, and healthy living."

The pieces can't simply be described as First Nations-inspired urban art; they



establish a unique style that pushes the envelope of contemporary Aboriginal culture. "What the artists are trying to do is reinvent tradition within the framework of contemporary society," explained Ritter.

Beat Nation is on display at the MAC until January 5, 2014. As a part of the program, the museum will be holding separate events. On November 1, there will be Nocturne, a multimedia performance featuring Madeskimo and Jackson 2bears. On December 5, there's a roundtable discussion on the exhibit curated by Candice Hopkins. And every Sunday until December 1, the MAC hosts *Red, Black, and Graffiti*, which includes a guided tour of the exhibit and a hands-on workshop.

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The first spark of activism

Young Cree from Chisasibi demonstrate to support the people of Elsipogtog

by Jesse Staniforth

In Montreal's Cabot Square, at the edge of the crowd waiting for the October 18 Solidarity for Elsipogtog march to begin, stood four young people from Chisasibi: Summer Twenish, Dakota Quachegan, and their two roommates Melissa and Stephany.

The day before, the RCMP had launched a full-on military assault against the blockade set up by the Mi'kmaq First Nation of Elsipogtog to protest a corporate fracking operation near Rexton, New Brunswick. Snipers in full battle dress, officers leading attack dogs and hundreds of RCMP officers in bullet-proof vests converged to brutally enforce a court injunction against the protest camp that began last June. In the confrontation that followed, some reported that snipers aimed their rifles at Elders and children. Six police cars were later set on fire and supporters reportedly threw Molotov cocktails into the road to bolster barricades. The RCMP arrested 40 people, including Chief Arren Sock, and used rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannons and pepper-spray against protesters.

Immediately, dozens of solidarity demonstrations were organized across the country, like the one in Cabot Square. Twenish, who moved to Montreal in July to attend Vanier College, knew right away that she wanted to take part.

"I am very big on Aboriginal rights, and there was just an explosion of it on my Facebook and in the news," she said. "I thought I'd go check it out and show that I'm also interested in that aspect of Aboriginal culture – the rights and freedoms that we have."

But her roommate Quachegan, a Dawson College student who arrived in the city in August, wasn't sure whether it was worth attending. He followed his friends to the Square but still hadn't made up his mind.

"When I first heard about it, I didn't really feel like going," he said. "But then I heard women singing, and realized the gravity of the situation, with fracking and the RCMP. It just got to me."

Watching a woman pass with a braid of burning sage, Twenish said, "I really wish I could smudge. You think I could just go over and ask her?"

"Sure," said one of her friends.

Twenish hesitated. "I wish I had my own smudge kit," she said.

The crowd moved around to one side of the statue to hear speakers and singers – including noted Métis writer Chelsea Vowel – and then began the march. As if on cue, Montreal police immediately informed the marchers over a loudspeaker that the demonstration was illegal under a bylaw that forbids public protests that haven't been previously approved by authorities.

"Part of me was nervous," said Twenish later, "but I figured the worst that could happen is maybe they bring out the tear gas. I felt it was more impor-

"PART OF ME WAS NERVOUS, BUT I FIGURED THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN IS MAYBE THEY BRING OUT THE TEAR GAS."
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POUR LA DÉFENSE DE LA TERRE
Budweiser

photo by Akiva Levitas

tant to show my solidarity than to fear something happening."

Quachegan was equally worried, though he said it was concern more for his friends than for his own personal safety.

"I felt a little nervous," he said. "Not for me specifically, but for [my friends]. I didn't want them to be caught in anything if they tried to block us. I was really generally worried."

As they got ready to walk, Quachegan asked, "What ever happened to Idle No More, anyway?" As he later explained, "I remember back in March, hearing about the walkers getting to Ottawa. Then they got back and the whole protest was done. Harper didn't show up – he went to see the pandas instead. I thought that was ridiculous."

After the Nishiyuu walkers completed their 1,600 km trek, Quachegan had the impression that Idle No More disappeared.

"We didn't hear about it anymore," he said. "It seemed like everybody forgot about it all at once. It felt like we did all that stuff for nothing. We walked from up north to Ottawa, showed them we could do that, and Harper didn't even come. That really shocked and surprised me."

Twenish agreed, saying, "It's going on a year since this big movement started and it needs more attention: nothing has changed. Things are still going to happen to Aboriginal people in the future. Just because we walked to Parliament or had a hunger strike, nothing's changing."

That might explain why Twenish and Quachegan were in the streets of Montreal with their friends, trying to keep a comfortable distance from the police. As they walked, they looked over their shoulders, nervously joking about the situation or quietly listening to traditional singers, all the while making sure they weren't about to be surrounded and arrested. But the police kept their distance, to everyone's relief.

The protest made its way down St. Catherine St., finally arriving at Berri Square without incident. Drummers sang and protesters chanted. The mix was a little odd, said Twenish.

photo by Akiva Levitas

"I wish there was more involvement here in the city with Aboriginal people who live here," she said. "I know there are quite a few, but at the protest there were none. It's great that people were showing solidarity with other young people, caring about the environment or our rights, but it'd be nice to see more Native people out there. This started with Aboriginal people, and they should stick with it through to the end."

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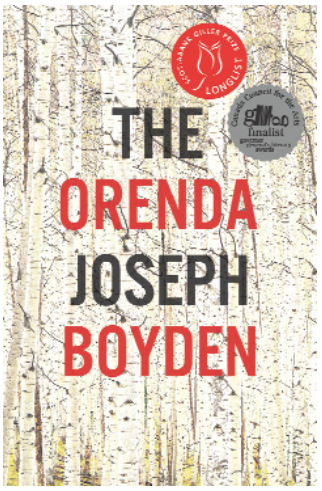

Giving voice to The Orenda

Joseph Boyden speaks about his acclaimed new novel

by Amy German

An intense and jaw-dropping thriller, Giller Prize winner Joseph Boyden's latest novel, *The Orenda*, tells a story from three perspectives at the time of first contact in a remarkable and unforgettable tale.

A significant departure from his last book, *Through Black Spruce*, which chronicled the stories of Northern Ontario Crees, *The Orenda* tells the stories of Snow Falls, a captured Haudenosaunee girl, Bird, her Huron captor, and Father Christophe, a Jesuit from France who has come to the New World to save the souls of the "savages."

While Boyden writes non-fiction articles on Native themes for publications like the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's Magazine*, he said that writing fiction from a First Nations perspective has a lot to do with his own identity.

"My blood is part Anishnabe, so I draw from that in my writing. That is what speaks to me and what I am most passionate about, that part of me. I write other things as well but that is the stuff that has the psychic weight that I crave writing about," said Boyden.

Expressing these voices with authority required several years of research, which included speaking with many Elders about the history of the Nations he brings to life in his stories. He said this was his greatest concern with the novel.

While the Haudenosaunee are often the book's so-called "bad guys" off lurking in the woods, Boyden's lead female character is also Haudenosaunee. He described this protagonist as one of the strongest characters to emerge from his writing.

Saying that he didn't want to write another *Last of the Mohicans*, Boyden consulted Canada's foremost experts on the history and culture of the Haudenosaunee, the Huron and the Jesuits.

Among them was poet George Sioui, a Huron Elder and a University of Ottawa professor.

"I brought him some tobacco and approached him very nervously. I realized that I was nervous because I was asking his permission for something and if he said no, it would have made it very difficult to write this book," Boyden recounted.

"But, over the course of conversations he said yes, I want you to do this and that was huge, getting that permission. It opened up my ability to do my job as a writer feeling confident rather than pussyfooting around."

The meticulous research took time, however. Boyden said it took him two-and-a-half years just to write the novel's first 50 pages. The other 450 pages flowed much more smoothly over the next 14 months. This long period of creation gave him a level of intimacy with his characters as they evolved and he led them through an epic saga at the crux of North American history.

As with his previous works, there are unsettling moments of gore and grotesque detail in *The Orenda*. This reality was part and parcel of the era and is expressed with ferocious intensity, particularly with the descriptions of what Boyden called "mourning warfare," the tradition of exacting revenge on the enemy for lives lost among ones' own tribe.

Joseph Boyden

Boyden acknowledges the graphic violence, but he doesn't believe any of these scenes are gratuitous, describing them as very personal to the characters.

"One way I looked at this was to keep in mind that the Spanish Inquisition was happening at the same time, so torture was happening all around the world. To the Christians it was to punish, demean and belittle, but to the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat it was to honour and impress and trying to own something they saw in their enemy," said Boyden.

While he said some of his characters were inspired by historical figures such as the missionary Jean de Brébeuf and Jesuit priest Isaac Jogues, Boyden masterfully blends these figures with fictional characters for plot twists that produce an intense reading experience.

For more information on Boyden and his work, go to: www.josephboyden.com

May the youth walk in the path of their elders in commemoration of November 11th,1975,
and may they remember the words of Dr. Billy Diamond: “Together, we have done the impossible”

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"INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE PAYING THE PRICE TODAY FOR WHAT HAPPENED IN THOSE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS,"

First Nations behind bars

QPIRG's *Culture Shock* discussion highlights Aboriginal incarceration

by Irkar Beljaars

A panel discussion on Aboriginal incarceration was one of the many events that took place at this year's *Culture Shock*, an annual event which looks to dispel the stereotypes surrounding immigrants, refugees, Indigenous peoples and communities of colour. Hosted by the Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG), the event seeks to bring these communities together in order to educate the public on the issues faced by these groups.

Canada Behind Bars: On the Incarceration of Indigenous Communities brought together Jessica Danforth, the executive director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, Patricia Eshkibok, from the Native Para-Judicial Services of Quebec, and Konwatsitsa:wi Meloche, an educator from Kahnawake.

Eshkibok began by speaking about the high rates of Indigenous incarceration as a direct connection to residential schools and how that system destroyed First Nations families and communities by creating inter-generational problems that continue to this day.

"Indigenous people are paying the price today for what happened in those residential schools," she said.

Indigenous people make up about 4% of the Canadian population but they comprise 23% of the prison population – a 40% increase since 2001. A factor in those shocking statistics is that many Indigenous men and women end up serving longer sentences and are denied programs that would help them get out of prison earlier. First Nations women are especially vulnerable and serve longer sentences in solitary confinement than do their non-Native counterparts.

"NOWHERE IN CANADA DOES A PARTICULAR GROUP HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THE INDIAN ACT GOVERNING THEM. HOW IS THAT RIGHT?"

Danforth said that First Nations communities are facing a crisis, which can be directly linked to the residential schools and the Indian Act that stripped First Nations women of their rights and left them vulnerable to violence. She stressed the need for men to speak out about violence against women.

The final speaker, Meloche, shared her story about racism. "We are born into racism, born into violence and it is state violence that is hurting us."

Meloche spoke about the racism behind the Indian Act and asked why was it necessary. "Racism is the fear of sharing power." But more importantly, she pointed out, it is institutionalized racism. "Nowhere in Canada does a particular group have something like the Indian Act governing them. How is that right?"

One incident Meloche shared with the audience was an evening she and a friend went to a nightclub in Châteauguay. After standing in line for some time, the bouncer eventually told them, "No Indians allowed." Naturally she was very upset about the encounter. "I felt so humiliated, I had to walk past all those people, some of whom were quite rude."

When asked about how to turn the tide, Meloche said we need stand up against the government and the Indian Act needs to be eliminated.

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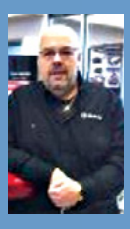

We are proud to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement which took place on November 11th, 1975 and to humbly quote Dr. Billy Diamond:
"Together we have done the impossible

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

The first snow

by Xavier Kataquapit

I am always thrilled by the season's first snowfall. A few days ago I was pleasantly surprised to awake to see a soft fresh blanket of snow outside my window that covered the pines and forest floor. In my remote cottage near the great James Bay, winter comes early and this first snow provides a bracing reminder that freezing temperatures and icy roads are on the way.

It was obvious to me this past week that the weather was going to turn cold. I could see it in the colour of my campfire, in the soft ring around the moon and in the frantic comings and goings of An-nee-koh-cha-sh (squirrel) as he readied his winter food stash. Still, I never really feel that winter has arrived until that moment when I climb out of bed and witness for myself that the fluffy stuff has once again turned the world into a Christmas postcard.

We humans are not so different from our animal and bird friends when it comes to getting ready for winter. Like them we begin to sense the cold weather coming and we do what we must to prepare for it. In northern towns all across Canada people are weatherproofing their homes. They are tuning up the snow blowers and searching garages and sheds for the shovels they need to deal with the coming tons of white, fluffy and often wet and heavy snow.

Those living in the far north are insulating their water lines so they won't freeze, cleaning the wood stove chimneys, ensuring that there is a sufficient stockpile of cut and split firewood and sealing up any leaks in floors, walls and windows. We have more in common than we like to admit with the An-nee-koh-cha-sh, Amisk (beaver), Mah-keh-shoo (fox), Mah-ee-kan (wolf) and other creatures of the northern forest. All of us are doing what is necessary to live out the blizzards, minus-30 or lower temperatures and the hazardous conditions that make winter a test of survival.

Perhaps Mah-s-kwa (bear) has the best idea in terms of dealing with winter. He simply curls up in a cozy den and drifts off to sleep with a full belly until the seasonal alarm clock of spring and a hungry stomach. Then again, maybe Niska (Canada goose) has the right way of thinking with an escape flight to warmer climates in the south.

I warmly recall the first snow as a child in Attawapiskat. That day was very special for us in our small isolated community. It meant that freedom was on the way. As a remote, fly-in community we have few travel-worthy roads in the spring, summer and fall. That meant that we were really tied down to our town. You would think we Cree would love the short summer season we get but in general we all prefer winter. In the summer we can't leave town and we must put up with millions of mosquitoes, black flies, deer flies and all sorts of other nasty flying creatures with a singular genetic devotion to preying on our flesh and our blood.

Winter brings us a frozen, snow-covered land while our lakes and rivers are paved with ice to become highways we travel with snow machines of all sizes and sorts. The frozen season also allows us to construct the winter road and that means we have an ice highway out of town to other communities along the James Bay coast and the route south to Moosonee. It really is a big deal to all of us to be able to jump into a truck and drive to the train station in Moosonee and then go by rail to Cochrane, Ontario. From there we can access highways, trains and flights to anywhere in the province, country and the world.

So, my awakening to the first snow of the year will always mean freedom, the excitement of freely moving across the land and being able to find a peaceful spot under the cover of towering pines where I can build my fire and enjoy some piping hot tea.

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1-866-277-3553
(www.suicide-quebec.net)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources

Concordia University, Montreal:

The Centre for Native Education has changed its name to the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre (ASRC). The new name is inclusive of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis students the centre serves and recognizes its role as a resource for the Concordia community. For any further details contact: aboriginalcentre@concordia.ca or 514-848-2424 ext. 7327.

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Cisco, from father to son

Waskaganish: from the river to the table

The contest runs from October 4, 2013 through December 8, 2013 and is open to members of the Cree nation living in one of the Native communities of Eeyou Istchee who are at least 18 years of age. Limit of one entry per person per day. The winner of the first draw will be announced at 8:00 a.m. on November 13, 2013 during the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS. The winner of the second draw will be announced at 8:00 a.m. on December 11, 2013, during the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS.

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